

ILL OMENS & SUPERSTITIONS

Abdur Rauf Sakharwi



Short Guide to Superstitious
from a Muslim Perspective

Pocket Islamic Guides Series

ILL OMENS

and

SUPERSTITIONS

Abdur Rauf Sakharwi

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In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

الحمد لله وسلام على عباده الذين الصطفى اما بعدا

All Praise belongs to Allah. And peace be on His chosen Slaves

THE MONTH OF SAFAR AND THE ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS

MEANING OF SAFAR

Safar is an Arabic word. It is the name of the second Islamic month.

SUPERSTITIONS REGARDING SAFAR AMONG THE ARAB

In the pre-Islamic days, the Days of Jahiliyah, the Arabs held various incredible superstitions about 'Safar.' Historians have described them in detail but here we present a selected few.

The Arabs Imagined 'Safar' to represent a serpent in the belly of man. Whenever it was hungry it would nip and bite man. The pain that hunger brings is the consequence of the serpent's activity.

Some other Arabs take 'Safar' to stand for that animal inside a man's belly that is restless when hungry. Sometimes it kills the person whose belly it

occupies. The Arabs considered this malady more infectious than scabies.

Some suppose 'Safar' to mean those worms that are found at the tips of the liver and ribs so that a man's colour turns yellow (known as jaundice). Sometimes, it results in the man's death.

Some people say that 'Safar' is a famous month between Muharrum and Rabi 'ul-Awal. They ascribe many calamities to this month and draw ill-omens from it.

According to Imam Malik رحمه الله عليه men during the Days of Ignorance declared Safar lawful one year and unlawful another. Thus, they bracketed it with Muharrum one year so that warfare was unlawful during that month as during Muharrum sometimes, however, they separated it from Muharrum allowing warfare during Safar.

VIEWS ABOUT 'SAFAR' NOW-A-DAYS

Today also people stick to certain ideas about the month of Safar.

i) Marriage and happy events are avoided during this month. Anything new is not initiated this month. Anything new is not initiated this month. People imagine that marriages solemnised in Safar are nullified because they consider this month to be inauspicious. They delay their events until Rabi' ul-Awal begins. It has nothing to do with religion.

ii) With some people the first thirteen days of Safar are particularly inauspicious. On the 13th Safar they prepare boiled corn and distribute it so that they ward off the inauspiciousness. This practice has no standing whatsoever.

Such things are baseless. However the perpetrators of these things and their instigators always have uncanny explanations for their practices. One such explanation is

من بشرني بخروج صفر بشرته بالجنة

(THE PROPHET ﷺ SAID) WHOEVER GIVES ME THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE END OF THE MONTH OF SAFAR, I WILL GIVE HIM THE GLAD TIDINGS OF PARADISE.

People cite this tradition in support of their contention that the month of Safar is ominous. They say that the Prophet ﷺ had given glad tidings of Paradise on peacefully seeing through the month of Safar. It must be remembered that Mulla Ali Qari who has reproduced this tradition in his book *al-Mawadu'at al Kabir* and who is a great scholar of Hadith has rejected this narration as without foundation. (In his book he has collected many such narrations that are baseless.) Therefore, it is wrong to deduce an opinion from baseless traditions. Besides, if we ponder over the words of the narration nowhere do we find that the month of Safar is described as ominous. It is just a figment of people's imagination.

If we leave aside the question of this narration and consider its words then we will realise that the Prophet ﷺ was destined to die in the month of Rabi' ul-Awal and he eagerly awaited the meeting with Allah. This is why he longed for Safar to end and Rabi' ul-Awal to begin. Again, this is why he called that information a glad tidings. The books of *Tasawwuf* (mysticism) sometimes refer to this narration but it does not at all prove that Safar is an inauspicious month.

(iii) Some people, particularly the labourers, celebrate the last Wednesday of Safar as Eid. They have a holiday that day. They demand sweetmeat from their employers and receive festival allowances too. This thing is without foundation and must be given up.

(iv) Some people suppose that it is virtuous to have a holiday that day. It is a common belief among them that the Prophet ﷺ had a bath on this day on regaining health. This belief also is without evidence. On the contrary, it was on this day that the illness from which the Prophet ﷺ died began. How can we be happy on that?

(v) On this day some people smash their earthen utensils if they have any and some others get themselves silver rings, and amulets to protect them from the foreboding of the month of Safar. It is a superstition and people must not subscribe to it.

It is a continuation of that thought that the religious-minded in our era regard the month of Safar as ominous, as one that brings calamities and trials with it. People have gone to the extent of recording millions of calamities and hardships in this month. Not being satisfied with that, they have us believe that the Prophet ﷺ also faced difficulties in Safar. They have then suggested different forms of optional prayers which when offered would remove difficulties of the one who offers them. These things have no evidence in the Qur'an or *Sunnah*. When the concept itself is wrong that calamities descend in Safar then whatever builds up out of it is also wrong. We will see shortly that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has rejected this idea. We reproduce below an outline of the notions held about Safar.

"The second month of the year is Safar. Calamities descend in this month. Every year one million eighty thousand calamities descend of which nine hundred twenty thousand descend in the month of Safar alone. Thus we find in the Hadith 'If anyone gives me the glad tidings of the end of the month of Safar I will give him the happy news of entry into Paradise.' The slip Hazrat Adam ﷺ committed was in this month. Hazrat Ibrahim ﷺ was thrown in the fire on the first of Safar. Hazrat Ayub ﷺ was put to trial in this very month. Hazrat Zakariya, Hazrat Yahyā, Hazrat Jarjīs, Hazrat Yunus and the chief of Messengers, Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ all faced trial and tribulation in this very month. Hazrat Habil was martyred in this month. Therefore, every Muslim must offer four *rak'at* on the first night, the first day of Safar in the described way:- In the first *raka'ah* after *surah al-Fatihah* he must recite *surah al-Kafirun* fifteen times. In the second *raka'ah* *surah al-Ikhlās* as many times. In the third and fourth *al-Falaq* and *an-Nās* as many times. After offering the salutation he must recite seventy times

سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا اله الا الله
والله اكبر

(Allah is without blemish. All praise belongs to Allah. There is no god but Allah. Allah is the greatest). Allah will protect him from every calamities and distress and reward him heavily. In this month, an optional prayer is offered on the 1st day. After having a bath, offer two *raka'at* at the time of *ch⁻ast*, in each if the *raka'at* he must recite al-Ikhlās eleven times after al-Fatihah and after the salutation he must invoke blessing on the Prophet ﷺ seventy times. The words are

اللهم صل على محمد النبي
الأمي وعلى آله واصحابه وبارك وسلم

(O Allah, bless Muhammad the unlettered Prophet and his family and Companions, and bestow favours and peace). Then he may make this supplication:

اللهم صرف علي مني سوء اليوم واعصمني من سوء ونجني
عما اصاب فيه من تموه سألته بفضلك يا دافع الشرور وما
مالك النشور يا ارحم الراحمين وصلي الله على محمد
وآله واصحابه وبارك وسلم.

(O Allah! Distance from me the evil of this day and protect me from its evil. And, deliver me from whatever happens in it that forebodes evil through your Grace. O, the Deliverer from evil, the Owner of Resurrection, the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy. May blessings be on Muhammad and his family and Companions, and favours and peace). (Rahat ul-Quloob, Jawahir Ghaybi).

On the last Wednesday, he must offer two optional prayers. After *surah al-Fatihah*, let him recite *surah al-Ikhl⁻as* three times in each *raka'ah*. At the end of the prayers, he must recite the *surahs al-Inshiraah*, at-Tin, al-Fath and al-Ikhlās, eighty times each. Allah will bless these prayers and cause his heart to be generous." (Fada'il) ash Shuhud al-Ayyam).

In short all these things are simply wrong, baseless and invented. We have no evidence whatever from the Qur'ān and Hadith for these things. Also, we do not have an example of these things in the lives of the Companions,

the generation, after them, religious elders and our righteous predecessors. Rather, the Holy Prophet, ﷺ mercy for the universe, clearly rejected such practices of the Days of Ignorance and whatever of it until the Day of Resurrection, as also portentous ideas about Safar. He asked Muslims to keep away from imagining such things. Therefore, let us now read some of his sayings alongwith explanatory notes.

عن ابي هريرة رضي الله تعالى عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لا عدوى ولا طيرة ولا هامة ولا صفر وفر من المجذوم كما تفر من الاسد (رواه البخاري)

We have from Hazrat Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

"There is no infection, no evil omen. No *h⁻amah* (owl), and no Safar, but flee from the leper as you would from a lion." (Bukh⁻ar⁻i)

عن جابر رضي الله تعالى عنه قال سمعت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول لا عدوى ولا صفر ولا غول (رواه مسلم)

Hazrat Jabir رضي الله عنه has said that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say,

"There is no infection, no Safar, and no ghoul (or gh⁻ul)." (Muslim)

عن ابي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لا عدوى ولا هامة ولا نوء ولا صفر (رواه مسلم)

Hazrat Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

"There is no infection, no owl, no star and no Safar." (Muslim)

These are all sound Ahadith from Bukhari and Muslim. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has rejected in very clear terms the false notions and suspicions about Safar that prevailed in the Days of Jahiliyah (Ignorance) among the Arabs. He thus close the door on suspicion that show foreboding forever because his sayings are valid upto the Day of Resurrection,. It should be very clear

now that there is no ominous character attached to Safar and calamities, hardships or illnesses are not linked to this month.

In the Ah⁻adith quoted above, and other Ah⁻adith like them, other false beliefs are also mentioned besides Safar. The Holy Prophet ﷺ rejected them all. We give a brief explanation of these Ah⁻adith relative to these terms.

INFECTION

In the Days of Ignorance, people believed that a healthy person is infected too when he sits near a sick person or eats and drinks with him. They termed this illness 'Ud⁻a (infection). Like ancient belief, modern medicinal science also regards certain sickness as infectious, like scabies, leprosy, measles, small-pox, stinking breath (pyorrhea), conjunctivitis, and other catching diseases. The notion of an illness touching another is common in our everyday life and people stay away from those afflicted with epidemic diseases. Such people are segregated so that their bedding, utensils, food and drink are not touched and other people do not visit them. Children are distanced from them.

The merciful Prophet ﷺ declared this behaviour and belief as false and he said لَاعْدَى "By itself no disease is infectious but it is in the Hands of the Absolute Power to inflict anyone with illness or to cure him. He causes him to be ill whom He chooses and He leaves him healthy whom He chooses."

In a Hadith we find an explanation of this contention. A villager came to the Prophet ﷺ and said,

"Messenger of Allah! A camel feel the itch on its lips first or it begins to afflict it from its tail and then the mangy camel infects all other camels." The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him, **"How did the first camel get its itch?"** That man had no answer for it. The Holy Prophet ﷺ continued, **"Know that an infectious disease, an augury, and a**

superstition have no standing. After He gave life to everyone Allah appointed his provision and his difficulty."

Thus, life and death, illness and health, difficulty and ease are all predestined. If one sickness afflicts ten people that is their destiny and happens through the will of Allah. A disease cannot by itself afflict another without the permission of Allah. It is also known by experience that everyone is not afflicted by an infectious disease and many people remain healthy and safe. It proves, therefore, that the disease will not affect anyone by itself. Allah causes one to suffer whenever He chooses and lets one be safe whom He chooses.

The Hadith mentioned has dismissed the doubt that one disease affects another. The Prophet ﷺ asked the villager to explain, if one's illness was caught by another, how did the first one get it. Naturally, he did not get it from anyone else and so we must believe it that he got it by will of Allah. Once we accept this then we must believe about each other illness that they all got it by the command of Allah, and not by itself without the permission of Allah.

However, we have seen in the Hadith quoted, first of all, concerning the month of Safar that the Prophet ﷺ compared the staying away from a leper to avoiding a lion. Also, there are versions that prohibit visit to areas affected with plague. This prohibition is not because leprosy or plagues are contagious but because those weak in faith may not waver. If such a person gets the disease after being with a leper or going to a plague infested area, he will suppose that his malady would not have been his fate if he had not gone there, thereby defecting his belief and faith, the fact, however, is that he was destined to get that disease anyway. Even if he had not been there, he would have caught the disease. The will of Allah would have been realised.

At the same time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has disallowed one to flee from his resident area if it is hit by plague. With the intention to protect oneself from it. He has said that one must continue to stay there patiently. The same idea is behind this prohibition - that the person fleeing may not suppose that he has saved himself from the disease which he would have got if he had

remained there. The truth is that if was not destined to be afflicted, he would not have suffered by remaining there, but if he was so destined, he would have suffered even after running away from there.

As a precautionary measure, however, children and adults may be vaccinated and reasonable caution may be exercised within limits. Islam does not disallow us to adopt these measures but it requires us to put our trust in Allah believe firmly that the vaccination and precautionary steps are effective only if Allah wills them to be. As long as Allah wills these steps will be helpful but if He wills us to suffer vaccination and precaution will be ineffective as does happen often.

It is considered very necessary these days to get oneself vaccinated and it is firmly believed that those who are vaccinated will never suffer from the disease the vaccination is meant to ward off. Conversely, those who do not get vaccinated and then happen to be afflicted from the disease they blame it upon failure to get the vaccination. No one places any sort of trust in Allah. This behaviour is like exceeding the limits and needs to be corrected because vaccination is a mere course of action adopting which is not wrong whereas placing all trust in it at the exclusion of Allah is not proper in any way. Faith and trust must be placed in Allah alone at all times. One must believe that sickness and health are only at the command of Allah.

ILL OMENS AND BAD AUGURY

The Arabs of the Days of Ignorance were in the habit of seeking views of the fortune-tellers. Whenever they intended to do something, they would pester a deer so that it would run away from its resting-place, or they would disturb a bird causing it to fly. If the deer or bird took the right side, it was considered auspicious to go ahead with what they had in mind and if they had a journey in mind, they would proceed. If the deer or bird went to the left side then they considered an ill omen and inauspicious and they would shelve whatever task or journey they had in mind.

The Mercy to the Universe ﷺ said لا طيرة and rejected this idea. He said that drawing an ill omen or bad forebodings was wrong and not true. These

things do not influence the result of an undertaking and it is wrong to hold such a belief. Success or failure and profit or loss is in the hands of Allah who does what He likes and nothing is outside His Power. Whether a bird or a deer takes a right turn or goes to the left it is not a portent signifying good or bad.

ILL OMEN DRAWN NOW-A-DAYS

Even today ill omen and bad fore-showings are drawn in our society. These are unreliable and require us to repent and give up such practices.

- 1) Many people, especially women, consider it wrong to adopt curative measures for small-pox and measles. Some suppose that these diseases are caused by ghosts and evil spirits. It is incorrect notion.
- 2) It is also wrong on the part of those who believe that if a new bride locks up her home or trunk, then that house becomes locked meaning it becomes desolate.
- 3) Some people believe that if anyone takes up routine recital of *surah an-Nās* then he will be destroyed. This is an erroneous belief for, on the contrary, he will be delivered from distress.
- 4) Some, particularly women, hold a wrong conjecture that if anyone sits between the door posts and partakes food he will go in debt.
- 5) Some women shy from the company of a woman whose children die young. They believe that they will be infected with this misfortune. It is very evil to say so and they are being sinful in this way.
- 6) It is generally believed that in the life of every person his third and eight, thirteenth and eighteenth, twenty-first and thirty-eight, forty-third and forty-eighth years are difficult. This belief is without foundation.
- 7) Many consider that a calamity or disease will descend when they hear a dog cry. It is a baseless belief.

8) It is generally supposed that if the sharp spine of a hedgehog is placed in a house then as long as it is there, there will be quarrel among its people. Thus those who wish to cause dissention among a family they place the spine of a hedgehog in their house. However, this is a wrong notion.

9) The ignorant do not sweep their house when one of the families embarks on a journey. This too is a figment of their imagination.

10) It is a baseless belief that when it rains hails one can stop it by throwing out one of the pounding devices.

11) It is commonly believed that one must not wash one's hands and eat in the harvest field otherwise one loses the crop.

12) People hold that when menstruating or pregnant woman dies she must be chained when she is buried otherwise she turns into a witch and devours whoever she comes across. This is an idolatrous belief.

13) It is commonly believed that at the place where a corpse is given a lantern should be lighted for three days but this is not correct.

14) Some people say that if such-and-such an animal makes a sound, death will spread but this is a false notion.

15) It is supposed by some people that if the right eye of a man or the left eye of a woman flutters, they will face some difficulty but if it is the other way round it brings happiness. This is a wrong notion.

16) Among some people the belief persists that it is ominous to take the name of certain places or animals in the morning. This is sheer nonsense.

17) It is a belief among some people that a journey begun on certain days is propitious and on other days inauspicious. These are idolatrous beliefs. Muslims must not entertain them.

18) Many people suppose that if they get an itch on the palm it will bring them wealth and if the sole itches or a shoe is placed over another they will go on a journey. Such thinking is absurd.

19) Some women expect guests when a crow cries harshly at the para-pet of their house; this is again nonsense.

20) Many people believe that by beating anyone with a wooden spoon will cause him to be avaricious and he tends to eat much. This belief is absolutely baseless.

21) According to a superstition if anyone is hit accidentally by a broom he considers it bad and feels insulted. He then tells the other. "I will throw salt in a well so that you will have wrinkles on your face." This is a false belief.

22) Some people believe that if anyone is beaten with a broom his body withers down. Therefore, they exercise the broom so that the disease is warded off. This too is a false belief.

23) Some people when they are called from behind take it badly and are prepared to quarrel because of that. "Why did you call me from behind? Now, I will not be able to accomplish my task." This belief does not hold water in the eyes of *Shari'ah*.

24) It is absurd on the part of certain woman to believe that if they lose the grip on the handmill guests may be expected.

25) It is absurd too to expect guests when flour spills from the trough.

26) When the cock crows in the evening it is taken as an ill omen and the cock is slaughtered. There is no truth in this superstition.

27) In the opinion of some other people, the crowing of a hen foreshadows spread of an epidemic so they slaughter it. This is a wrong notion.

28) It is a wrong too to believe that a patient will not recover if two people go to fetch a doctor.

29) A new bride who goes to a well to fetch water is told to light a lantern before fetching water. This is a wrong idolatrous belief.

30) It is a habit among some that when someone is going somewhere and someone else sneezes then he stops proceeding and says that he will not get

his work done anymore (because of the sneeze). This is a false belief.

31) Some people consider it bad to sweep at night, to blow off a candle, or someone else clearing his throat. This superstition is false.

32) Another false belief is that if a doctor is to be summoned the horse must not be saddled. (aghlat ul-awam)

TO GET AN ASTROLOGER TO PREDICT THE FUTURE



An easy method of obtaining forecast of the future is the one that is in vogue in our cities. We see large signboards of astrologers, palmists and spiritualists at different places inviting people to know their future and get impossible things done. It has become a regular form of business.




Astrologers and palmists may be seen on the important roads under large bill boards, trained parrots by their side. Scores of envelopes are laid on the floor. These contain various topics reflecting on good or bad aspects of life. People pay for knowing what is in store for them. These road-side fortune-tellers also use numerology to predict the future and see into their clients lives. People bring to them their problems - whatever they will get a court verdict in their favour or not, get through their examination or repeat the class, progress or fail, and so on. Of these fortune-tellers astrologers, palmists and numerologists the cheapest is the one with the parrots. A bird - perhaps the parrot - picks up an envelope and its contents reveal the hidden aspects of a man's life.

Often the distressed, unemployed, heavily indebted or ill persons or those who have come from distant lands to make a living in a large city fall prey to these fortune-tellers. When they receive a good news they believe the fortune teller and go away happy. If the reports are discouraging their sadness multiplies and they go more discouraged than before.

It must be known, however, that it is unlawful to go to these people to learn the future and to believe in them. These things are sinful. Those who have

done so must repent and keep away from them forever. Let us see some of the Ahādith that warn us about this thing.

Hazrat Hasah  said that the Messenger of Allah  said, "If anyone approaches a diviner and ask him about anything (and believes in what he says) then his prayers for forty nights will not be accepted. (Muslim)

Hazrat Abu Hurayrah  said that the Messenger of Allah  said, "If anyone resorts to a fortune-teller and believes him in what he says, then he has denied what has been sent down to Muhammad  ." (Abu Dawood)

There is another Hadith. If anyone resorts to a diviner and asks him about something then his repentance will not be accepted for forty nights and if he believes the diviner in what he has said, then he has disbelieved (in Islam). (Tabarāni)

TO GET PREDICTION FROM THE QUR'AN

When a theft is committed on them, some people resort to a spiritualist or the Imam of a Mosque. They have a particular method to get prediction from the Qur'an or other books like the *Diwan Hafiz*, *Gulistan* and so on. They firmly believe the readers in what they deduce from it. They accuse the person who is pointed out in the reading and demand from him return of the stolen property. It happens sometimes that the accused person insults the Qur'an and turns to disbelief. Once, when a man was accused in this manner, he went to the mosque tore up the Qur'an and - may Allah protect us - urinated on its pages and said that the Qur'an and the diviner are liars.

Such things do happen. This behaviour is against the *Shari'ah*. On the One hand, the accused lost his faith and on the other there is mistrust leading to accusation and quarrel. It must be understood that it is wrong to divine from the Qur'an or any other book or to get it done and to believe in it. To use the Qur'an for it is a grave sin because often it leads to showing disrespect to the Qur'an and to distrust it.

TO TRUST THE JINN

Some people consult a Jinn who has taken hold of a man or woman or a young boy and who converses with other. They ask him about the unseen. For instance, they ask him to name thief or where they may find their stolen property. They trust him without getting evidence in a *Shari'ah* form. It is unlawful to do so. To blame theft on anyone without proper evidence is a grave sin.

INVOCATING THE SPIRITS

Some people when they suffer a loss they get *Hazr^{at}* done. To do this they choose a minor child and apply black ink on his nails. The child is asked to gaze at the nails and a spiritualist pays attention on the child. The child sees his observations take form on his nails and he answers the question of the spiritualist. People believe the spiritualist in what he deduces thereby.

This practice is not sound according to *Shari'ah* and it is wrong to believe in its results without evidence recognised by *Shari'ah*. Thus if anyone is blamed of theft by this method one must not believe it and it is wrong to punish anyone on this basis.

TO SACRIFICE AN ANIMAL THAT A SICK PERSON MAY RECOVER

It is a custom in our society that a sheep is sacrificed when anyone is seriously ill. The flesh is distributed among the poor and it is believed that by giving a life (the animal's) another life (the patient's) will be saved. The patient will recover and be protected in future. No other form of *sadaqah* is regarded worth while. This practice has no example in *Shari'ah*. To limit *sadaqah* to the sacrifice of an animal is *bid'ah* (an act of innovation) that must be avoided.

The Ahadith urge us to offer *sadaqah* without restricting it to any single form and a *sadaqah* may be offered accordingly.

THE WILL OF SHAIKH AHMAD

Muslims have removed themselves from religion and they no longer have full faith or trust in Allah. On the contrary, they are drowning themselves deeper into ignorant practices as they draw ill omens and ascribe inauspiciousness and indulge into innovative practices. The result is that the enemies of Islam have taken full advantage of their religious weakness and cause them damage whenever they can.

About a hundred and fifty years ago they drew up a fictitious will under the name of Shaikh Ahmad. This still finds currency among the Muslims. Muslims dread the consequences it threatens them with and expect the advantages it promises them but in the eyes of *Shari'ah* it has no standing as we see below.

This is a fictitious will. There is no one by the name of Shaikh Ahmad serving at the sacred chamber (of the Prophet ﷺ). What it says about worship and Hereafter are pious sayings but the Qur'an and Hadith are enough to draw one to pious action. To publish fictitious narrations and to ascribe imaginative ideas to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are gravely sinful things. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "Whoso attributes to me a lie must find a place for himself in Hell." (Mishkat, p. 32)

This is not a recent will. It is being circulated for a hundred and fifty years or so. When it was first published, the Ulamā investigated to find no one by the name of Shaikh Ahmad at the sacred chamber (*Rawdah Aqdas*) serving there or ever was there. The earliest version of the will had his name on it - Shaikh Ahmad is an employee at the *Rawdah Aqdas* and he has been given the glad tidings... The Ulamā found out too that the Christians were behind it. When the Britishers occupied India, they feared a *Jihad* by the Muslims so they conspired to keep the Muslims away from *Jihad* and devote themselves to prayers and fasting; they thought up an imaginary

will. thereafter, the Muslims took it up upon themselves to circulate this will by publishing it in large numbers. The will has an instruction for its reader to print and distribute it and thereby earn such-and-such blessings. It warns that one who fails to obey these instructions will face sorrow and loss. Whenever it is forgotten someone comes up with it again so it has continued to this day.

In short, this is a fictitious will and is not recognised by *Shari'ah*.

FAMILIAR SPIRIT

Different ideas are in vogue among common men and the spiritualists about a man's twin spirit or familiar spirit. One of the fantasies is that when one dies and is buried his familiar spirit escapes from the grave and troubles the living people; he does not die. Such ideas are absurd and baseless.

However, we know from Hadith that against every human birth, a devil is also born to its mother and it lives with the human being born at the same time. However, we do not find reference to its death when the human dies. It is called familiar because it is born simultaneously.

In short, it is wrong and contrary to *Shari'ah* to draw ill omen or harbour suspicion. It is only by the command of Allah and His power that one is good or bad, sick or healthy, successful or a failure, hopeful or hopeless. Nothing can happen unless He wills and once He gives the command for something to be done nothing can stop it. Therefore, we must place our trust in Allah alone and plead to Him for good things and success. He alone is able to do all things.

HAPPY AUGURY

Shari'ah disallows us to draw an ill omen as we have seen in the foregoing lines. However, it does not disallow us to take a good omen; rather, it has commended drawing happy augury as a *sunnah*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ

often took happy omens particularly from names of people and their places. A happy omen is taken, for instance, if a sick person loses hope of recovery but as he hears someone call "O! Healthy One!" he becomes happy and believes that he will be cured and gain good health. Similarly, if one loses something and tries to find it when he hears someone call "O Recoverer!" and he believes that he would find the lost thing. It is also with one who has lost his way and tries to find the right path when he hears another call out "O Finder of the road" and he draws a happy omen from it that he will find out his way.

IT IS SUNNAH TO DRAW GOOD OMEN



Hazrat Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه said that the Messenger of Allah took good omens but not evil ones and he liked good names.

Hazrat Anas رضي الله عنه said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that there is no infectious disease or an ill omen. I like good omen that is a good word.

It is reported by the father of Hazrat Hibbah Taymi رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There is nothing in *hawam* (animals). (That is, it is wrong to take omen from them for instance if a cat crosses the path, an owl hoots or crow crows.) It is right to take a good omen and an evil eye is a reality."

These Ahādith make it clear to us that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took a good omen but shunned bad omen and disallowed other people also from taking a bad omen and harbouring suspicion. The good omen that the Prophet ﷺ took was that when he heard a good name he liked it and held a good hope and became happy. We thus know from Hazrat Buraydah رضي الله عنه that when he appointed a governor (anywhere) the Prophet ﷺ would ask his name. If he had a good name, the Prophet ﷺ felt happy and his face would brighten up; but if the name was not good, he would be displeased and his displeasure showed on his face. In the same way, when he entered a

township he enquired its name and felt pleased if it was good otherwise if it was bad, revealed that he did not like it. (Abu D̄awood)

Hazrat Anas  has said that when the Holy Prophet  went out to attend to some affair and heard anyone call "O Successful One!" "O One On The Right Path!" he would show signs of pleasure. (Tirmizi)

He would change a bad name by giving him a good one. It is a good sign to have a good name and it is likened to an ornament of beauty and a sign of perfection - it augurs well for pious character and deeds.

WISDOM BEHIND DISALLOWING ONE TO TAKE BAD OMEN BUT RECOMMENDING GOOD OMEN

The Ulam̄a opine that we are permitted to take a good omen because it inspires one to have good hopes from Allah, to be hopeful of good things and His blessings and favours. There is no doubt that these things are superior although his hopes may not be achieved always. On the other hand, when a man takes a bad omen he does not expect anything from Allah but believes that he will be confronted with difficulty and hardship. Such expectations and imaginations are wrong and insensible. Therefore, *Shari'ah* has disallowed taking of bad omen.

INAUSPICIOUSNESS

Very close to taking ill omen is the habit of attaching inauspiciousness to certain things. In the Days of Ignorance, people held certain days, dates and animals as inauspicious they often found sinister characteristic in women horses and homes. This habit is found in our times too - certain days and dates are regarded inauspicious. This is more marked if something unpleasant happens on a day, or if loss of lives and property often occur at a particular place. In such cases these days and places are regarded as sinister.

However, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has disallowed this behaviour as he has disallowed taking ill omen and the habit of suspicion. He has made it clear that nothing is inauspiciousness then a woman, a horse or a home would attract this peculiarity but Islam has rejected such a thing in any of these three as it has rejected it in any other thing. Day or date.

Where inauspiciousness is reported in traditions to women, horses and homes, it refers to their distasteful and disliked character not to their inauspiciousness. For example, it is not liked in a woman that she be barren bad-tongued or demand a heavy dower, or her husband finds her ugly, or disliked.

When spoken about homes it could refer to its being small or crowded, not properly ventilated or that the neighbours are not congenial. Spoken about a horse, it could refer to the horse not being used in Jihād or its owner being arrogant and pompous; it could also refer to a horse that is not ridden on, or is expensive or disliked by its owner.

There is no doubt about it that if the occupants of a house are not happy with it, or a husband does not incline to have intimate relations with his wife and they are compatible in any way, or the owner does not like his horse, then, in these cases, the occupants may move over to another house, the husband may divorce his wife and the horse may be sold - but inauspiciousness may not be attached in each of the three cases. We have an example of this. Someone said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "Messenger of Allah, we used to live in a house where we were prosperous in terms of our members and our wealth. Then we shifted to another house but our numbers and our wealth have declined here. Shall we give up this house? And, move over another place?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Leave this house and move to another so that your dislike and doubts are removed." The house itself was not inauspicious or sinister causing loss of numbers and wealth. However, it is not wrong to separate oneself from these things or remove them and it is not the same as attributing an ill omen or sinister character to them.

WHAT IS HAMAH

We had seen in the Ah^{adith} quoted above that the Prophet ﷺ at the same time as rejecting Safar also rejected *H^{amah}*. Let us see what it is. The literal meaning of *H^{amah}* is "head" or "summit", and 'bird of prey or vermin'. We are concerned with the second meaning of 'bird of prey' to which Hadith refers. The Arabs in pre-Islamic days attached a sinister meaning to this bird. For Instance, they thought a bird emerges from the head of a murdered person. This bird is called *h^{amah}*. It is ever complaining 'Give me water to drink, give me water to drink!' And, once the murdered person is avenged it flies away to a distant land.

Some of them thought that when the bones of the corpse decay and rot then they turn into a *h^{amah}* that emerges from the grave and roams about hither and thither and it Enquires into the affairs of its family.

Some others among them believed that *h^{amah}* is an owl that perches on some house hooting the while. It thus gives them tidings of destruction and death.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ rejected this belief and disallowed us to subscribe to it. He said that *h^{amah}* has no reality.

THE VISITS OF THE SOULS

Some beliefs in our times do resemble the pre-Islamic superstition of *H^{amah}*. For instance, some of our people suppose that all the souls visit their homes on Friday or Thursday and request them to offer charity on their behalf. They curse those who do not give any charity. Every day for a month they make rounds of their homes. Similarly, there is a common belief that the souls visit their homes on *Laylatul Bara'at*, *Laylatul-Mi'raj*, *Laylatul-Qadr* (the 15th Shaban. 27th Rajab and 27th Ramadhan), and the Eid-days. Therefore, they take pains to consign reward to them. This belief is without substance and not supported by any Hadith.

As for the traditions that mention the visits of the souls, these traditions are weak, in the first place - and weak traditions are not reliable when discussing matters of Faith. Secondly, the souls are not at liberty to move about at will but they are dependent on the permission of their Lord, Allah. They have no authority to go anywhere without the permission of Allah. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to believe that they move about under every condition and it is without substance. (Fatawa Rahimiyyah)

GH̄UL (GHOUL)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ rejected the superstition of ghouls (Arabic, *gh̄ul*) too when he denied that Safar had any reality. What is it? The Arabs of pre-Islamic era had built up different ideas of jinn and devils of a particular type.

Some of them took *gh̄ul* to refer to an animal in the deserts that appeared before men and led them astray and killed them.

Some others held it to refer to Jinns who were sorcerers who involved people in trials and mischief and who misguided them.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, لا غول - thereby is no truth in the idea of a *gh̄ul*," thereby dismissing all fallacious conceptions in this regard. He described such ideas as unreal and called them suspicion. He made it clear that none can be misguided, harmed or ruined without the will of Allah. Of course, if Allah wills then these things may cause harm.

However, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has not rejected the existence of *gh̄ul* but he has been shown in certain Ah̄adith to seek the protection of Allah from their mischief. One of the ways of seeking protection from their mischief is to call the *az̄an* forthwith. This will cause them to flee; in this way one may protect oneself from their evil.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE STARS

At the same times as rejecting Safar the Holy Prophet ﷺ he also rejected the concept of النوء.

This is the name given to the twenty-eight stages of the moon. When a stage is completed at the time of dawn, one star falls down and another rises in the east to take its place.

The Arabs thought that at the perfection of one stage of the moon or stars it rains. They linked rain to these stages and held the stars alone responsible for rain.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ rejected this belief and declared this conception of the Arabs as baseless. Such thinking leads man to idolatrous beliefs.

It is only in the powers of Allah to cause rain or to prevent it. He causes rain to pour down when He wishes and to go dry. The movement of the stars and the planets and their rising and setting may be the apparent cause of rain or a dry spell but the true driving force is the will of Allah, the True Influence and Absolute Power. (Ma'ariful Qur'an)

وصلی اللہ تعالیٰ علی خیر خلقہ محمد وآلہ واصحابہ وبارک وسلم
تسلیمًا کثیرا کثیرا.

May blessings of Allah, be on the best of His creation, Muhammad, and his family and companions - and His favours and peace a complete peace, profusely.

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